

THE ARMENIAN NEUME SYSTEM OF NOTATION

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ROBERT AT'AYAN

Translation & Introduction by
V. N. NERSESSIAN

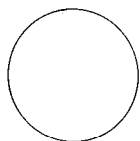
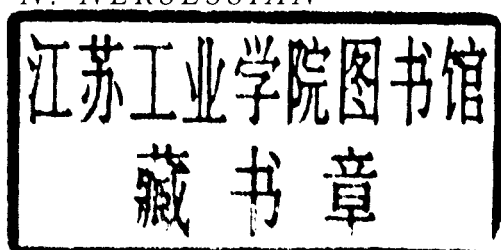
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CURZON
CAUCASUS WORLD

CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION
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First published in 1999
by Curzon Press
15 The Quadrant, Richmond
Surrey TW9 1BP
England

© 1999 R. A. Aryan
Translation © 1999 V. N. Nersessian

Typeset and designed by Emanuela Losi / Desert♥Hearts
with additional work by Nick Awde & Fred James Hill

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Bookcraft, Midsomer Norton, Avon

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress in Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0 7007 0636 4

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With grateful acknowledgement to the
CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION
for its support in the publication of this volume

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Phonetic transcription of the Armenian alphabet
used in the English translations

Աւ	a	Յյ	y, h
Բբ	b	Նն	n
Գգ	g	Շշ	sh
Դդ	d	Ոո	o, vo
Եե	e, ye	Ճճ	ch'
Զզ	z	Պպ	p
Էէ	e, ē	Ջջ	j
Ըը	ə	Իի	i
Թթ	t'	Սս	s
Ժժ	zh	Վվ	v
Իի	i	Տտ	t
Լլ	l	Րր	r
Խխ	kh	Ցց	ts'
Մմ	ts	Խւ	w, v
Կկ	k	Փփ	p'
Հհ	h	Քք	k'
Ձձ	dz	Օօ	ō
Ղղ	gh	Ֆֆ	f
Ջջ	ch	Ու	ou, v
Մմ	m	Լ	ew, ev, yev

ROBERT AT'AYAN

Robert Arshaki At'ayan was born in Tehran in 1915, son of the writer and translator Arshak Gevorg At'ayan (1877-1938). His family emigrated to Armenia in 1922. During the Stalin era of repressions, his father was wrongfully tried and executed in 1938, and was exonerated posthumously in 1955.

Young Robert studied music at the Erevan Conservatory. He graduated in 1941 and began teaching in the same institution from 1944. In 1962 he became director of the institute and professor in 1977. His doctoral research on Armenian khaz notation, prepared under the supervision of Professor K'. K'oushnaryan, was published in 1959.

His publications include *A Manual of Armenian Notation* (1950), *Armenian Khaz Notation* (1959), and *The Collected Works of Komitas* (vols 1-6; 1960-88). He also authored numerous articles, a selection of which (written in German) were included in *Essays on Armenian Music* (London, 1978), as well as several entries in the sixth edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

A composer in his own right, Robert wrote several pieces for chamber and other instrumental music.

He died on March 4th, 1994.

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

This book is an investigation of the Armenian khaz notation system. The scope of the research is not to solve all the problems related to the khaz system but to communicate the fruits of research on the main historical and theoretical aspects of the system based on original sources.

The origins and development of the system are outlined in the context of the history of Armenian sacred and secular musical traditions. The Mashtots' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran) in Erevan has more than 1,000 complete musical manuscripts, numerous fragments and other original sources with musical contents which furnish valuable information on early and medieval Armenian music. The preliminary research conducted on varied sources, in particular the *Sharaknots'*, *Khazgirk'*, *Ch'ashots'*, *Gandzaran* and *Tagharan* (Hymnals, Khaz-Books, Lectionary, Canticles and Chants), has allowed the author to form a general picture of the development of the khaz system, while a number of important manuscripts were identified and made the focus of study. A number of Georgian manuscripts in the State National Museum of Georgia were also consulted for comparative analysis.

The musicological studies of western scholars have been considered in detail and re-evaluated. In reassessing their findings, a number of their hypotheses have been questioned and rejected, such as the view that Armenian notation used in the 12th century was borrowed from other medieval notation systems. The author also rejects the observations of western scholars on the intonation value of the khaz signs.

From among Armenian scholars, Robert At'ayan analyses the research of Eghia Tntesian and Komitas on whose work he relies heavily. Tntesian's monograph (1834-81) *Nkaragir ergots' Hayastaneayts's* (*The nature of Armenian songs*) and Komitas' (1869-

1935) *Hay ekeghets'akan erazhshtout'youn* (Armenian church music) and his other studies are comprehensively evaluated. Special attention is given to a letter written by Komitas to the editor of the journal *Tach'ar*, published under the title 'Sharakani khazeri nshanakout'younə' ('The meanings of the Sharakan khazes').

With the exception of the above authors, At'ayan confines himself to original research. In discovering new manuscript sources in the holdings of the Matenadaran, illuminating not only their general but also musical paleographic features, he constructs a fresh interpretation of the history of khazes and their characteristic features. Through discovering and establishing the connection of these notated songs with the orally transmitted versions as recorded by N. T'ashch'ian in the last century, he establishes the principles of the system. Furthermore, At'ayan goes on to prove beyond doubt that the Armenian khaz system was employed in the Middle Ages not only for sacred but also secular music.

The bulk of the research was carried out in 1948. In 1954, At'ayan defended his thesis at the Armenian Academy of Sciences for candidature. On that occasion a summary of his research was published in Russian and, in 1959, the same work with slight alterations was published in Erevan under the editorship of the late Academician Professor L. S. Khachikyan. In view of the extremely scarce amount of information and research on Armenian khaz notation system in musicological circles, At'ayan was only too happy to respond to a request from the newly founded Institute of Armenian Music in London and agreed for his work to be translated into English.

For this English version, minor editorial changes have been made. After chapter 4, the section dealing with the works of Sp. Melik'yan and two other Soviet Armenian authors — H. Hovhannisyan and V. Samvelyan — have been excluded. At'ayan's own intention to add to this study his article on 'Grigor Gapasak'alyan ev khazagrout'younə' ('Grigor Gapasak'alian and khaz notation') has not been considered necessary since the study was published separately in the journal *Banber Matenadaran* 5 (1960). Since the publication of this monograph, another Armenian musicologist, N. T'ahmizyan, has published substantial research on the subject of khazes. In all his studies T'ahmizyan follows the

guidelines that At'ayan laid down, and his articles are listed in the bibliography, readily available for readers to consult.

The author of this book demonstrates throughout his conviction that the illumination of the many aspects of ancient Armenian music (such as the subject of khazes) has special bearing on the wider research carried out on medieval music of the Christian Middle East and of Christian music in the Early and Middle Periods.

In the previously published volume *Essays on Armenian Music*, three articles by At'ayan in German were included. Two of these — 'Professional Armenian vocal music' and 'Polyphonic elements in Armenian folk music' — have been added here in their English translation.

The notes have been edited to cover research since the publication of the work in 1959. The bibliography is restricted to works mentioned in the notes. For completeness, most up-to-date scholarly works of immediate relevance are cited. The first three chapters of this translation were checked and approved by the author.

REVD DR V. NERSESSIAN

Feast of Giwt Khatch

25 October 1998

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